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U.S. Radiation Report Worries Other Diplomats in Moscow

By DAVID K. SHIPLER

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MOSCOW, Feb. 10—Reports that the microwave radiation of potentially harmful microwaves whose effects on health are radiation related to Soviet eavesdropping devices in the American embassy here have caused concern among diplomats from other countries, who fear that their embassies might have similar problems.

The continued silence on the matter by the United States Government has fostered apprehension among the diplomatic community. The subject has become a main topic of conversation among European and Asian diplomats at cocktail parties and luncheons, with some reduced to asking American correspondents whether they have information about the radiation.

Moscow has long been a city of rumors, fostered by the Soviet Union's secrecy and the controlled press. Bits of speculation spread and multiply, both among diplomats and ordinary Russians.

But this rumor has been the product largely of American secrecy, and it has had the strange result of provoking what appears to be more anger against the Americans for not speaking publicly about the problem than against the Russians for allegedly causing it.

The rumors began circulating after American officials were briefed on Friday by Ambassador Walter J. Stoessel Jr., who is said to have told them that microwave radiation, believed used by the Russians to activate or to recharge batteries in bugs concealed in walls and floors, had been detected in the embassy building.

The Ambassador was reportedly instructed by the State Department to say nothing about the problem outside embassy circles. Consequently, some non-American diplomats and their wives have been under the erroneous impression that dangerous radioactivity has been discovered, rather than glass by conversations within.

According to one embassy source, the radiation has been present since the nineteen-sixties, but increased in intensity at least six months ago. The fact that the State Department allowed so much time to pass before telling embassy employees has triggered some angry outbursts by some American officials and their dependents.

In response to complaints from privately employed Americans who frequent the embassy, officials obtained permission from Washington today to brief all United States citizens living in Moscow. But the briefing was confined to general assurances that no harmful radiation had been detected in the areas generally open to outsiders—the ground floor of the nine-story building, the snack bar and a basement room used as a nursery school.

The officials, who asked not to be identified, refused to comment on the nature of the radiation or the possible danger on upper floors of the embassy, where almost all key offices are located. The impression was left that the radiation was concentrated on those floors. One source said it was strongest in the ambassador's office.

A 'Delicate Problem'

WASHINGTON, Feb. 10 (Reuters)—The State Department confirmed today that it was having a "complicated and delicate problem" with the United States embassy in Moscow. But a spokesman, Robert Funseth, refused to say what the problem was.

Other officials said they understood that one form of Soviet surveillance involved beaming microwaves at windows to pick up vibrations caused in the